

Preface

This annual report of the Washington State Cancer Registry is the third publication to include cancer incidence data covering the entire state. It represents the ongoing effort by the Department of Health, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the Blue Mountain Oncology Program, physicians, and tumor registrars throughout Washington. These data are presented in the hope that they will assist health care providers, public health officials, voluntary organizations, and concerned citizens in their efforts to prevent and control cancer in Washington.

Introduction

Cancer is a heterogeneous group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. The various forms of cancer were responsible for 9,797 deaths among Washington residents in 1994, comprising twenty-five percent of all deaths. In 1994, cancer (all sites combined) was the most common cause of death among adults ages 35 to 74 years and the second leading cause overall. With 25,015 cases of cancer diagnosed in the state in 1994, some form of cancer will likely strike one in three Washingtonians in their lifetime.

Illness and death due to cancer are increasingly preventable through two types of strategies. Primary prevention strategies aim to reduce, usually through lifestyle change, the likelihood that a healthy individual will develop cancer. Alternatively, secondary prevention is accomplished by screening asymptomatic people to diagnose cancers at an early, more readily treatable stage.

This report of the Washington State Cancer Registry (WSCR) summarizes information on new cases of cancer (incidence) and death due to cancer (mortality) for Washington state residents. The report provides information on cancer of all sites combined and the 24 cancer sites most frequently diagnosed in Washington residents. This information can be used at the state, county or regional level to identify the burden of morbidity and mortality associated with each type of cancer. This information, combined with information on cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment, is useful for program planning and policy development aimed at reducing the burden of cancer.